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ABSTRACT

This book presents the Contextual Systems Model (CSM), a theoretical framework for the study and education of young children at risk for failing at formal schooling. Chapter 1, "Contemporary Children and Risk," provides a demographic snapshot of the realities of children's lives and introduces formal concepts regarding risk and risk research. Chapter 2, "The Discourse on Risk and Early Schooling," discusses the political discourse, the readiness debate, and Piagetian theory. Chapter 3, "The Invidious Triangle," critiques theoretical models locating risk in children, families, or schools. Chapter 4, "A New Lens: The Contextual Systems Model," discusses the relationship between children, families, and schooling, and presents a framework grounded in systems theory. Chapter 5, "General Systems Approaches to Understanding Early Schooling and Risk," formally introduces GST concepts and presents examples relating these concepts to problems in educating at-risk children. Chapter 6, "The Child as a Developing System," focuses on the child from birth to 8 years and applies GST concepts to development. Chapter 7, "Life Hazards Contributing to Educational Risk," details contextual influences on development, including poverty, social insularity, unemployment, household organization and stimulation, child maltreatment, parental psychiatric distress, and peer rejection. Chapter 8, "What Do High-Risk Children Come To?," describes contemporary schooling as a context for development which may enhance or intensify risk. Chapter 9, "Conversations between Children and Schools," addresses educational problems and implications for practice, policy, and research. Three case studies are presented to ground the theoretical concepts in real-life experiences of children. Contains 276 references. (KDFB)